

The Signature

A man in a military flight suit is wearing a blue VR headset and a light blue surgical mask. He is holding a blue VR controller in his right hand. The background is a blurred image of a crowd of people.

**CELEBRATING
MILITARY SPOUSES**

**NASSIG HOSTS
IEAFA COURSE**

**SIG TEACHERS GO
ABOVE AND BEYOND**

Direct Line

Courtney Schonffeldt, Sigonella Elementary School Principal

I think it's safe to say that this school year has been unlike any other. Social distancing and masks on our children's sweet faces are just a few of the hurdles teachers and students have faced this school year. However, our teachers have continued to provide a much-needed sense of community and connection for our children, pulling out all of the stops to spark student interest and ensure children reach their goals. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, our teachers work incredibly hard to fulfill our DoDEA mission to educate, engage, and empower our military-connected students on a daily basis.

Teacher Appreciation Week, which takes place the first week of May, is the perfect time to recognize our teachers for their tireless work and their unwavering belief in all students and their ability to succeed.

Student excellence is a top priority for all of us. Our teachers are dedicated to meeting each individual student's needs and providing the best education possible, which is evident in our children's academic success. For example, the changes in their writing throughout the year have been impressive. We line the hallways of our school with our student's work, and we see student writing about favorite pets, explanations of mathematical equations, informative pieces about historical figures, and opinion pieces about environmental impacts.

Our teachers also create a wide variety of learning activities designed to help students develop their individual knowledge and skills. Student projects such as the Robot Museum, the Wax Museum, and Habitat Designs engage our learners to bridge content from all subject areas. Students participate in philosophical chairs in which they learn to debate appropriately using reasoning and evidence about essential topics. Our teachers utilize Number Talks with even our youngest learners, encouraging children to explain their mathematical thinking to build a strong foundation and flexibility with numbers. Children regularly visit our school library to devour the wide variety of texts available for learning and enjoyment. Students love learning Italian, exploring art, creating music, staying active in P.E, and learning new technologies.

Our teachers are committed not only to our students' academic success, but also developing caring relationships. Our goal is to educate the whole child and create a community that allows children to thrive in an environment where they feel they belong. Sigonella



teachers understand the importance of social-emotional skills for learning, growing, and connecting with one another. They create caring, engaging, and inclusive learning environments that prioritize the well-being of everyone in the classroom and school community. When the instruction and climate evoke enjoyment, empathy, relevance, and appropriate levels of challenge, children are more likely to learn. Teachers at Sigonella Elementary School go the extra mile to care for our children and ensure they feel loved.

Truly, I could write for days about the impressive work that takes place in our school. Sigonella teachers love children, love their jobs, and take pride in the important work of child development. Throughout this Teacher Appreciation Week, we celebrate and honor everything our teachers do to ensure children succeed, feel loved, and continue to be life-long learners, no matter what challenges they face. Please take a moment and thank a teacher this week for their dedication, service, and commitment to our children.



Keeping Our Kids Safe Online

By Jon Greenert, *NCIS Sigonella*

Some of us are old enough to remember sitting in front of the television as kids and hearing that ominous public service announcement: "It's 10 PM, do you know where your children are?"

It seems ancient now, but the message should still resonate with parents. The truth is, even if your children are safe in your house, it's hard to really know if they're safe if they're on an internet-enabled device.

Every year, more and more children are getting online to interact with others and learn new things. COVID-19 has accelerated this trend as families stay home and kids attend school virtually. It is important for all Sigonella parents to be involved in their kids' digital lives and take measures to protect them online. Here are some helpful tips:

1. Set Ground Rules. Establish guidelines for the kinds of sites your kids can visit, the apps they are allowed to download, and the times they are allowed to use electronics. Consider "blackout" periods that require disconnection. Remember that this is good for adults too!

2. Go Beyond Safeguards. Simply installing monitoring software and/or checking your kids' devices periodically won't guarantee their online safety. Time, attention, and active conversation are the best tools to protect them. Understand the sites your kids are visiting and the apps they are using. What are they used for? What kind of privacy settings do they have? How does the platform monitor and remove inappropriate content?

3. Be Proactive. Teach your kids about the risks of being online. Help them understand that a stranger online can be as dangerous as a stranger in person. Make sure your kids know how to recognize when someone or something online doesn't seem right and they feel comfortable reporting it to you or another responsible adult.

4. Spot the Red Flags. A child being victimized online will likely show signs of it. Whether it's spending more time on their devices, taking extra steps to conceal what they're doing online, or reacting strongly when access to the internet is limited, knowing the warning signs is extremely important.

5. Get Involved. Show interest in what your kids are pursuing. If they like playing online games, try playing with them. If you're open to what they're doing and enjoy it with them, your kids will be more likely to respect your rules when it comes to their digital activities. It can also lead to a stronger line of communication which can help mitigate the chances of victimization.

Technology is changing rapidly and it's difficult for parents (and law enforcement) to keep up. Our kids are living that change and arguably understand and respond to it better than the older generation does. To be effective at protecting them online, it is essential to stay engaged, communicate, and learn about what they're doing. The most important line of defense is you as a parent.

If you or someone you know has become a victim of online crime, you can always reach out to us at the Sigonella NCIS office, either at 624-9210, or through our app, which you can access by Googling "NCIS Tips."

THE SIGNATURE

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Editorial submissions are welcomed from all Naval Air Station Sigonella departments, divisions and tenant commands. **Editorial submissions** should be sent to the Public Affairs Office via thesig@eu.navy.mil. All articles submitted by non-staff members will be considered contributing writers.

In the Spotlight



Name: Christian Gordon-Perkins
Command: CTF 67
Department: N6

By MC2 Josh Coté, *NAS Sigonella Public Affairs*

When it comes to finding a job, not everyone makes a living doing what they actually enjoy. Fortunately, Electronics Technician 2nd Class Christian Gordon-Perkins from Los Angeles, was able to strike that balance.

Gordon-Perkins is assigned to Commander, Task Force 67 (CTF-67), one of our 37 tenant commands here in Sigonella.

CTF 67's mission is to provide professional and relevant support to U.S. Sixth Fleet, Naval Forces Europe, Naval Forces Africa, NATO and unified commanders in order to strengthen enduring and emerging partnerships and maintain our nation's supremacy at sea.

Within CTF 67, Gordon-Perkins works for the N6, or communications, department where he helps process the information gathered by the rotationally deployed P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol aircraft.

"We deal with mission material," said Gordon-Perkins. "The planes go out and do their missions, then they bring the information back and we extract what they collected. The main focus of our job is to extract information, but the gear is obviously not always 100 percent so fixing and troubleshooting the gear, we really get to work hands on with the equipment."

He continued, "My favorite part about my job is getting to work with technology. I joined the Navy to do that type of work. I love being able to work with electronics."

Not only does Gordon-Perkins enjoy his job, he is also good at it.

"ET2 Gordon-Perkins is an irreplaceable asset at CTF 67, stemming from his vast knowledge in the ET rating and bringing new innovative ideas to the team to fix complex problems," said Chief Information Systems Technician Kimmothy Curtis,

departmental leading chief petty officer.

On top of just doing his regular daily work, Gordon-Perkins also holds several collateral duties for his command. Soon he will be fully qualified as an Assistant Command Fitness Leader as well as a fire warden for his command. He is also a work center supervisor along with being the Assistant Lead Petty Officer.

For Gordon-Perkins, the decision to join the Navy was inspired by a family member.

"I originally joined the Navy because of my cousin," said Gordon-Perkins. "He was the only person in my family to join the military, and he came home one day and was telling me about it and it sounded really interesting to me. Before that I had always wanted to join. It looked really awesome to be able to serve your country so I joined based on that."

As of November, Gordon-Perkins will have been in the Navy for eight years. Before being stationed onboard Naval Air Station Sigonella, he was assigned to USS Comstock (LSD 45), home ported in San Diego for four and half years.

Coming from a ship to shore duty can be a big change in the type of work that you are used to doing in your daily routine.

"Working here is completely different from the work I did on the ship," Gordon-Perkins. "On the ship I worked with combat systems and worked with radar, and here I work with what they call the media gear."

Although Gordon-Perkins works hard, he also takes advantage of his time off here on the island.

"When I am not at work I enjoy hanging out with my family," he said. "I like to work out, play video games and work on my car. I do what my wife wants to do. She is more of an outdoorsy person than I am."

Sigonella Hosts IEAFA Course

By MCSN Triniti Lersch, *NAS Sigonella Public Affairs*

The Inter-European Air Forces Academy (IEAFA) and subject matter experts from U.S. Air Forces in Europe Safety Office conducted an aviation safety course, for the first time, specifically tailored for Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, April 26-May 7.

IEAFA is located onboard Kapaun Air Station adjacent to Ramstein Air Base in Germany and is a unique unit within the DoD that has the authority to cross borders and train on a variety of military professional topics. In its short history of only five years, IEAFA has already trained more than a thousand students across the European Command theater from 42 different allied and partner nations.

This Sigonella-specific class was unique because it included North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) members, Air Force squadrons, Navy and Marine personnel, as well as Italian Air Force components.

“As the newest mission in the Sigonella airspace, I think this is a great opportunity for NAGSF members to discuss operational issues with the other members of our local Sigonella flying community,” said Brigadier General Houston Cantwell, commander, NATO AGSF. “The ability to learn together and talk about aviation safety, risk management, and safety culture is paramount to safe and effective flying operations. Any opportunity we have to work together more effectively and safely makes us all better aviators.”

According to Major Brandon Williams, IEAFA instructor, this course helps the military mission specifically on the flying side of operations.

“The block of instruction that I personally taught was the risk management section of Air Force safety,” said Williams. “Other courses that we’ll include will be Air Force Safety Program Management (ASPM), how we will structure safety and a wing level or squadron level, and the functions and publications that govern what they do there.”

The purpose of this course is the ability to prevent future mishaps.

“We’ll do our due diligence in investigating mishaps and trying to find the root cause of what really happened,” said

Williams. “If it was a one-off mechanical failure, we could investigate to the point of finding out that maybe it was a bad batch of, let’s say, screws from a certain manufacturer. We can eliminate those screws from the pipeline supply chain, because of that one incident. We look at that as having prevented a future mishap, by taking the faulty parts out of the supply chain.”

Presenting the course in Sigonella offered an opportunity for students with different experiences to work together and learn from each other.

“NAS Sigonella is unique in that they get all these entities together with the same common problems,” said Williams. “Sometimes in joint environments like that you have people who have common problems but they never talk to one another. A benefit to the students here is they’re getting to talk and they’re building relationships in these different units, so if they have the same issue they can call somebody across the flight line and say ‘Hey, are you having the same problem?’ Then they can put their heads together and find a common solution that benefits everyone.”

IEAFA teaches a variety of professional military education, including the Inter-European Squadron Officer School and the Inter-European Non-Commissioned Officer Academy. On the technical training side they offer the Inter-European Basic Instructor course, the Inter-European Aviation Safety Program Management Course, and the Inter-European Tactical Combat Casualty Care Course. IEAFA is also in the midst of developing other courses that will align and support operational priorities to allies and partners in Africa as well as Europe within the next fiscal year.

“NAS Sigonella’s willingness to welcome the IEAFA and USAFE-AFAFRICA team to offer this safety course has opened the doors for many beneficial conversations that may have never happened otherwise,” said Cantwell. “The course gave students a great chance to make connections across multi-national channels, strengthened their understanding of how other communities apply safety principles and practices, and strengthened Sigonella’s local flying community safety culture.”



Sigonella Teachers Go Above and Beyond

By Megan Mills, *NAS Sigonella Public Affairs*

In the summer of 2020, Sigonella Community Schools (SCS) faced a gargantuan task. After several months of virtual learning, the administrators, teachers, and staff began to plan for the new school year while facing several unknowns.

They would need to incorporate a host of COVID-19 mitigation measures while serving children who had lived through a lockdown and were returning to a school building that would work differently than ever before.

Unsurprisingly, the teachers and students of Sigonella rose to the challenge and have been able to navigate the shifting tides to create a largely uninterrupted learning environment.

"The teachers have done an amazing job this year working with students in the middle of the pandemic," said Dale Moore, principal of Sigonella Middle/High School (SMHS). "We've thrown a lot of things at them between social distancing, mask wearing, disinfecting surfaces between classes, and more, and they have taken all of it in stride while providing a quality education to our students."

Unlike many schools, SCS has spent most of the year conducting in-person learning, and teachers adjusted many of their lessons and procedures to comply with new regulations. Hands-on activities, experiments, group and partner work, and other essential activities for authentic learning had to be modified, which took teachers a great deal of extra training, planning, and time.

Nevertheless, teachers have found ways to include many of these activities while maintaining safety protocols.

Jennifer Wilson, a fourth grade teacher at Sigonella Elementary School (SES), remembered the first time she grouped students for a science lab.

"I took all the precautions: sanitizing hands, making sure masks were on correctly, bagging supplies with their names so they got the same supplies each day, and keeping partners the same so that contact tracing could be done

if needed," she recalled. "The students were so excited to be working with each other. You could see the smiles behind their masks and feel the energy in the room."

Even reading has been changed by the pandemic.

"My room is always full of books because it's essential that kids get exposure to lots of fiction and non-fiction," said Jeanne Ragonese, a second grade teacher at SES. "However, this year they couldn't choose books from bookshelves, so I've made two class sets of huge Ziplock bags full of books. On Monday, each child chooses a bag of books for the week. Then on Friday, they put the bags back and that set of books quarantine for a week and the following Monday the kids choose a book bag from my second set."

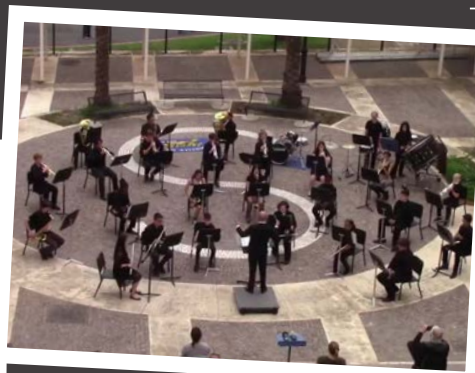
Antone Leustek, music teacher at SMHS, moved his rehearsals outside to take advantage of greater ventilation. "Because of the pandemic, the dangers of singing and playing instruments next to one another forced us to learn and practice outside," he said. "While this does sound wonderful with the weather we have, at that time it was 90 plus degrees, there was construction around the whole school, bugs, and people walking by and waving. Oh wow, sensory overload!"

In addition to modifying in-person lessons for safety protocols, teachers had to be ready to switch to virtual learning at a moment's notice, something that happened in the fall for about three weeks. As Wilson noted, "It isn't a matter of just switching from one to the other. Teachers really do have to plan differently for both types of instruction."

Shawn McCarthy, video communications and U.S. history teacher at SMHS, agreed. "For my history classes, the lessons were designed so that if we went to remote learning there would be a seamless transition. This actually happened in November and our course continued just as if we were in the classroom."

Through all the changes, Sigonella students have

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Heroes on the Home Front: Military Spouse Appreciation Day

By **Kyrene Resel**, *NAS Sigonella Dispatch*



Military spouses are the backbone of the military community and deserve recognition for their contributions and sacrifices.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan became the first sitting president to declare a National Day of the Military Spouse, and this year Military Spouse Appreciation Day falls on May 7.

Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella is home to a diverse group of military spouses with nearly every branch represented. Just like service members, no two military marriages or spouses are the same.

Mr. and Mrs. CMC

One unique population within the military spouse community is the dual military couples. For Navy Medical Readiness & Training Command Master Chief Albert Wood and NAS Sigonella Command Master Chief Anna Wood, married for 24 years, it has certainly been quite the journey. (Due to the similarity of their names, they have taken to calling each other Mr. and Mrs. CMC.)

"There is a lot of understanding and give and take. While it can be a disadvantage with competing priorities and dual active demands, one advantage is that we play these roles as both military members and spouses, it's easy to understand our unique roles," Mr. CMC said.

Occasionally, the couple finds themselves attending functions in support of the other, which can require internal clarification.

"When we talk about upcoming events, we always stop and ask: am I going as your military spouse or as your active duty spouse who also happens to be a CMC," said Mrs. CMC. She added that she loves playing both roles, she added, but stressed that communication is essential.

Facing the Challenges

Military spouses face a multitude of challenges. Frequent moves require finding new jobs and new friends.

Deployments mean managing the home front, which oftentimes means single parenting combined with the waiting game.

Molly Pruitt, who has been an Air Force spouse for the last 18 years, said that the rewards outweigh the challenges overall. "Getting to know a new base community and a new town is an adventure that I have been lucky enough to do several times with my best friend, but it can be especially challenging when living overseas."

Sesalee Surls, who has been married for nine years, had no intention of becoming a military spouse when she first joined the Navy. "I was only in for three years, so it wasn't that hard to switch from service member to spouse. However, I think my experience of being in the Navy has helped me in ways I didn't realize."

Surls continued, "I have been on deployments, I know the lingo, how the promotions and politics work, as well as the mindsets of those who are in the military." Surls added that it would have been quite the shock were it not for her prior military experience.

Heather Barrera, a Navy spouse of 21 years, says that one of the hardest parts is raising her kids without a dad for months on end. "Being a single parent isn't easy. Everyday challenges can sometimes feel much bigger and overwhelming. Filling the role of mom and dad takes a lot of balance, patience and an extremely good support system."

The Woods have each been on both sides of deployment, which helps them appreciate the difficulty of being the spouse at home. "I understand that when I'm deployed, my husband's role of 'dad' is even harder," said Mrs. CMC. "I do my job, go to my rack, workout, and take care of business, and he does all the same, but still has to go home and take care of the family." Wood added that having experienced both roles of military spouse and service member, being the

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Italian News

A Street Food Tour of Palermo

By Dr. Alberto Lunetta, *NAS Sigonella Public Affairs*

If you take the ferry from Calabria to Sicily, you must try the famous “ferry arancini.”

Hollywood actor Stanley Tucci recently closed his CNN series “Searching for Italy” with an episode on Sicily where he proclaimed that the scrumptious arancini sold on that ferry are a “cannot-miss local specialty.” However, arancini are just one of the many scrumptious Sicilian delights sold in cafes, push carts, bakeries, bars and food stalls all across the island— especially in Palermo, the capital of Sicily.

A few years ago, Forbes Magazine named Palermo fifth among the world’s top ten cities for its delicious street food. In addition to a variety of small pizzas, sesame bread sausage rolls and calzoni, which are generically called “rosticceria,” there are many unique treats to taste in Palermo, especially if you’re not faint of heart!

The most popular Sicilian snack is the aforementioned arancino, an orange-sized deep-fried rice ball filled with ragù. Varieties include pistachio, eggplant, spinach, mushrooms, ham and cheese, salmon, ricotta cheese, and even seafood.

Almost as popular as arancini is panelle, a crispy fritter made with chickpea flour and parsley. Just like arancini, panelle are of Arabic origin. Though it used to be an inexpensive food, over the centuries panelle became a specialty found on the menus of expensive restaurants.

These chickpea fritters are traditionally eaten as filling of the mafalda of moffoleta, the traditional sandwich breads from Palermo. They can be found at many rotisseries and street carts on the sidewalks of the old part of the city. Panelle can be eaten as a snack, lunch or dinner, often with crunchy crocchè or cazzilli (potato croquettes).

If you are not afraid of pungent taste, Palermo offers the famous “pani ‘ca meusa” (“pane con la milza” in Italian) or spleen sandwich. In the Middle Ages, butchers began to cook the cow offal (spleen, trachea and lungs) in a big pot with lemon and salt and then fry them in pig lard. Today, rotisseries still cook this

chewy meat in the same way and serve it warm with the traditional vastedda bread that can be either “schietta” (plain, “single”) or “maritata” (“married,” sprinkled with caciocavallo and ricotta cheese). If you want to try this unique sandwich, you must travel to Palermo as it is the only place where you can find it.

If that’s not adventurous enough for you, try the “stigghiola,” a snack of lamb gut seasoned with parsley and onion and grilled on the barbecue until it becomes crispy on the outside and soft and creamy on the inside. Stigghiola are served chopped with a sprinkle of lemon and salt. Another popular offal-based street food is “frittola,” which is made of pieces of veal bones, cartilage and leftovers. Frittola are boiled and then fried with lard and spices.

A food tour of Palermo cannot be complete without the sfincione. It’s a spongy pizza topped with onions, tomato sauce made with dried oregano, sardines, and caciocavallo cheese. According to tradition, the nuns of the San Vito Convent in the heart of Palermo first baked sfincione in the 18th century for the Saint Sylvester festivity, dressing it with the traditional condiments typical of farmers’ produce. Sfincione used to be prepared during the Christmas holidays, but today is baked all year round.

There is also a variant typical of the town of Bagheria called “Sfincione bianco” (white sfincione) because it is made with tuma (or fresh ricotta cheese) and breadcrumbs instead of tomato sauce.

Sfincione was recognized as a Prodotto Agroalimentare Tradizionale (traditional Italian regional food product) by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture.

Some historic sources say sfincione means “sponge” and the word may be the result of a mixture of Latin, Greek and Arabic words. Others say the name could derive from the Sicilian dialectal term “sfincia,” which means soft.

During the festival of Saint Rosalia, the beloved patron saint of Palermo, you can sample babbaluci, another popular street food descended from ancient Arab cuisine. Babbaluci are snails that are seasoned with salt, pepper, then boiled and fried in olive oil with parsley and garlic. Some Palermitani eat them by sucking the snail out of the shell and making the traditional “scrusciu” (Sicilian for noise), but people commonly use toothpicks.

A larger version of these small snails is called “crastuna,” or horns, (from “crasto” which means ram in Sicilian) but they are cooked with tomato sauce and onions. If you’d like to try any of these, make sure to be in Palermo on July 14 for St. Rosalia’s day!

Finally, if you like fish, you should try the “purpu vugghiuto” (in Italian, “polpo bollito” or boiled octopus), which can be mainly found in the coastal areas of the city such as Mondello, Sferracavallo and Romagnolo. The super fresh polpo is boiled in a large pot and served chopped with a squeeze of lemon. Buon appetito!



Sicily has a strong and unique street food culture. Palermo is a melting pot of ancient cuisines featuring a creative array of must-try delicacies which was recognized as the fifth best street food in the world. (Photo by Strettwoeb.com)

Sigonella Navy JROTC Program Makes History at National Academic Championship

By Samuel C. Williams, *Sigonella Middle/High School*

This year's Sigonella High School (SHS) Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) Academic Team made school and JROTC history when it competed in and won the 2021 National Academic Competition.

Composing the SHS 2021 National Academic history-making team were Eliza Moore (Commanding Officer), Noah Bachicha (Executive Officer), Norman Nguyen (Operations Officer), Allison Havard (Color Guard Commander), and Katherine Payne (Squad Leader).

Not only is Sigonella's JROTC program the smallest in the Navy, but this year's victory in the National Academic competition was also the first time in history that the school had ever risen to that level in the competition. "I think most people don't realize how big of a deal this competition is and what a monumental victory this is for our program," explained Senior Chief Victor Martinez, the teacher in charge of the school's JROTC program.

Each unit selects five members to participate in the competition. Some units operate at the regimental level, which means their programs consist of 300-plus cadets. Sigonella consists of only 31 Navy JROTC cadets.

"This program was established in order to promote and recognize outstanding academic achievement among Navy JROTC units and individual cadets," said Martinez. "There are 14 areas and 619 Navy JROTC programs worldwide, and they all participate in this annual competition. However, Sigonella is the absolute smallest of all of the participating programs. There are schools participating in this competition that have more Navy JROTC cadets than Sigonella has in its total student body!"

But as we all know, it isn't the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog that matters. And when it mattered most, the fight in each of the SHS representatives

came out swinging!

"We knew that we had great kids in our program and that they were sharp and ultra-competitive," Martinez explained. "We also knew that all they needed was a chance to display what they knew, and the competition gave them that chance. Every member of that team was sharp, focused, prepared, unintimidated, and earnest about bringing this year's championship back here to the island."

Sigonella's quintet studied hard in preparation for the academic competition, which consisted of 70 questions in an online format with topics ranging from Navy knowledge, to general knowledge, to current events.

"While I am extremely proud of the tremendous accomplishment of these cadets, I am in no way surprised at all," Samuel Williams, teacher at SHS. "Their drive, work ethic, attention to detail, and individual and collective determination clearly indicated to me, even in the classroom, that if given a platform such as this, they would excel—simply because they all are individual and collective leaders and winners!"

The National Academic competition was created in order to promote and recognize outstanding academic achievement among all Navy JROTC programs worldwide.

Sigonella, which is part of an NJROTC region that includes Italy, Spain, and the northeastern United States, has entered the competition each year since 1996 but was never previously able to walk away with the coveted title "Number #1 Navy JROTC Program in the World." However, this year, three seniors and two underclassmen altered the school's course in history.

And now, thanks to the maturity, dedication, and tenacity of Eliza Moore, Noah Bachicha, Allison Havard, Norman Nguyen, and Katherine Payne, the SHS NJROTC cadets can now proudly exclaim, "We are number one!"



Driving Safely in Sicily

By Kyrene Resel, *NAS Sigonella Dispatch*

Approximately every two days, a Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella community member is involved in a reported car accident here in Sicily.

From January of 2020 to January of 2021, there were 161 traffic accidents resulting in 24 serious injuries and two deaths.

“Drivers cannot possibly anticipate everything that will happen behind the wheel,” said Machinery Repairman 2nd Class Kyle Drummond, the NAS Sigonella Safety Office leading petty officer. “Our community can prevent accidents by avoiding distracted driving, gaining a better understanding of driving here in Sicily, minimizing distractions, and maximizing your personal awareness of the challenges.”

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving caused 3,142 deaths in 2019. “The use of phones while driving is one of the more common reasons associated with distracted driving,” said Drummond.

Checking a text, talking on the phone, and even playing music takes a driver’s attention away from the road and possible hazards for the few critical seconds needed to avoid an accident.

When it comes to using your phone while driving, Drummond’s advice is clear, “Put your phone away. If you are using it for GPS, put it in a phone holder where you can clearly see it so that your eyes are focused on the road and not on the screen. Put your phone on “do not disturb” mode while you are driving or put it somewhere out of reach to avoid the temptation and distractions it may cause, and if you need to use your phone and you are by yourself pull over and stop before doing so. If you have a passenger, ask them to check your phone if it is a true necessity or be your DJ while driving.”

Drivers on cell phones see just a fraction of their driving environment.



True for both handheld and hands-free use.

Keep your attention where it belongs – on the road.

Children, pets, and driver fatigue can also cause distractions. “As the driver it is your mission to ensure the safe transport of everyone inside of that vehicle; you are the captain now,” said Drummond. “This means you set the rules. Ensure everyone is wearing a seatbelt. That funny meme or video can wait until you are done driving, and whoever is riding “shotgun” is helping you navigate or mitigating the distractions around you.”

For many Americans, Sicilian roads and driving culture provide added challenges.

“Sicily is a beautiful place to drive; however, the experience can sometimes be jarring for all levels of drivers, regardless of experience,” Drummond said.

Some hazards that may be new for many American drivers include animals and livestock, bicyclists, slower moving vehicles (such as farm equipment and older cars), faster moving vehicles, vehicles that pass more frequently, and even the roadways themselves.

Many of the roads around NAS Sigonella are rural and may not be maintained due to their location and frequency of use, which means they can be uneven with large potholes, splits in the asphalt, and may lack road barriers. These persistent dangers are the reason you must remain vigilant behind the wheel at all times.

Drivers should also be aware that the asphalt used here is composed of materials including volcanic ash, marble, and sea shells which can increase the braking distance than traditional pavement we are used to in America.

If you are a pedestrian, it’s important to understand that the vehicles may be traveling at high speeds in many areas and to be extra cautious as you navigate the sidewalks and decide to cross the street.

However, these challenges do not provide excuses for poor or reckless driving. “The biggest danger on Sicilian roadways is ourselves,” Drummond said.

As Americans stationed in Sicily, it is important to maintain personnel accountability and remember that you are in control of yourself and your car.

When the decision is made to drive with distractions or recklessly, there can be a wide range of consequences that follow, and personnel assigned to NAS Sigonella are held to the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). “The penalties are pretty straight forward...up to 594 euros for the first offense, then 1-3 month license suspension if the second offense falls within two years of the first,” Drummond said.

“Driving in Italy with your Allied Forces Italy (AFI) license is a privilege, not a right, while stationed here, and yes, it can be revoked even for distracted driving,” concluded Drummond.

"Spouses" cont'd from Page 7

spouse is still the hardest job.

Paula Gruny, who has been married for 27 years and an Army spouse for 19 years, said that moving and deployments are challenging, but resilience is key to success. "As a military spouse, you will be thrown some curveballs, and if you can bounce and not break, it will serve you well."

Advice for New Military Spouses

Surls offered some advice for new spouses. "Keep an open mind, do your own research, and take everything with a grain of salt," she said. "Know that you are now a part of something bigger than yourself. Your spouse has a job to do and you have a job to do. Communication and honesty is the key, and know it will be worth it in the end."

Pruitt also had some advice for spouses to make transitions easier. "View each new assignment as a fresh start," she said. "Each move is a new adventure with a chance to make new friends, redo a new home and learn all about the new community and live life to the fullest."

Barrera also had similar thoughts. "Take advantage of all the opportunities presented to you. Be it education, travel or just learning to see things from a new perspective."

Unsung Heroes

For the Woods, cheering each other on and being their biggest fan has played a key role in both their marriage and careers, and they believe without a doubt that military spouses play an unsung role in the success of the military.

"Without spousal support, it would be hard to bloom where I'm planted," Mr. CMC said. "Having that support allows me to succeed at work with the role I play, and then helps my command to succeed."

While each of these spouses has unique experiences, they credit the same things for their success: resilience, communication, honesty and making family a priority.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to the home front, and NASSIG CMC Wood, expressed her gratitude for military spouses here on base, especially this past year.

"The role they have had to fill of keeping the home front solid while being home by themselves or with their children, and worried about family back in the States has been pretty intense. I just want to say thank you to all the moms and spouses out there."

Wood also expressed the intent of this command to support the military spouse. "We are here to support the military spouses across the board. Whether it is their mental, spiritual and physical welfare, we are here to support them. At the end of the day, the hardest job is that of the one on the home front."

"Teachers" cont'd from Page 6

impressed everyone with their resiliency and their mask-wearing skills.

"We always talk about how resilient our military connected kids are, but with all the pandemic related issues, they have done an outstanding job adapting to a very different experience," said Moore. "They have made the best out of a very difficult school year."

Mask-wearing has been one of the biggest changes at the schools, but students have surprised everyone with how well they adapted to the face coverings.

"Our kids have been absolute rock stars," said McCarthy. "For military-connected students who are accustomed to change, they have really adapted to the new norms rather quickly. From the first days of school in August until now, they have worn their masks in class and stayed responsible by keeping their workspaces clean."

"I really suspected that I'd spend the majority of my time this year asking students to wear masks, pull up masks etc. and they have been great about doing all that we've asked," said Moore. "I attribute this to the work parents and teachers have done with the kids to prepare them to be in our school community."

For Tara SeeTai, art teacher at SES, the masks provided an opportunity for even more creativity.

"One project that went really well was students making their own masks out of t-shirts," she said. "They really enjoyed it and it was such a relevant project for our times."

Nevertheless, teachers are eager for a mask-free future.

"Often-times we check for understanding via something a student has said or written. However, some of the best information and feedback we get from our students is simply being able to see their facial expressions; their faces give us a bit of insight," said McCarthy. "Being able to only see their eyes peering over their masks takes away one source of helping understand the student."

"I really look forward to seeing students laughing and smiling again," he added.

Like many teachers, Leustek found silver linings in the challenges. "The pandemic did teach us all some valuable lessons - always be understanding, roll with the punches, and be patient. Nothing is set in stone, and things can change quickly; sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. Either way, we will make it work."

No matter what the school year has thrown at them, Sigonella teachers have worked hard to make the school a positive place for students.

"Teachers are amazing with the amount of creativity and boundless energy they put into school on a daily basis," said Moore. "This has been a hard year, and they have taken what could have been a real negative and made it shine. I'm proud to be able to work with such an amazing group of professionals."

Happy Teacher Appreciation Week, NAS Sigonella teachers!

SWIM-A-THON

Compete in our virtual swimming challenge throughout the month of May



**Track your meters
with a watch or app**

Send in a photo

of your workouts to Fitness_Sigonella@eu.navy.mil
for verification and prize consideration.

The top four swimmers will receive a prize at the end of the month!

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